

POPD Manifesto

from the
POPD collective

Designers fear they are the lackeys of capitalism. Of course they are.

But they are also architects of society. They hold in their hands (a little bit of) the means to define the practices of which human experience and social order are constituted.

Practice Oriented Product Design (POPD) recognises the opportunities and responsibilities this power entails. Of late, designers have been interested in *User-Centred Design (UCD)*. The radical idea – that products and services should be designed for the people who use them – is welcome progress. But it does not go far enough. UCD focuses on single products and on individual users; it encourages a fragmented pick-and-mix methodology for understanding user needs - needs which are taken to exist even before the designer's intervention. *POPD* is more:

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**POPD contends that product innovation requires innovation in practice.
POPD says that the product is nothing without the practice.**

POPD tenets:

POPD holds that practices are the basic unit of society

POPD renounces all approaches, whether in social science or in design, that focus on specific products or upon individual users. *POPD* focuses on the routinised ways of doing, understanding, knowing, and desiring which comprise human experience and social structure at all scales. It is in the performance of practices that users and products come together, in complexes of skills, meanings, materialities and temporalities. It is in understanding the dynamics of practice and in identifying points for intervention that the power of *POPD* resides.

POPD knows we are all PODers (practice oriented designers),

engaged in assembling components of practice – products, competences, meanings - with skill and occasional creativity in the process of accomplishing everyday life. *POPDers* accept the limitations and opportunities this represents.

POPD goes beyond the 'verbal'

Kelley and Littman explain that IDEO thinks of products "in terms of verbs, not nouns: not cell-phones but cell-phoning". *POPD* has a more radical understanding of how practices structure society.

POPD realises that no object is an island

so it attends to the relations between products, not to objects in isolation.

POPD understands that history matters!

Understanding the dynamics of practice means understanding continuities and patterns of co-evolution over time: look backwards to see forwards.

POPD recognises that needs are made

Needs do not exist, ready made. They emerge from the dynamics of practice. Products, designers and consumers are all agents of change but none can change alone. Their interdependence defines and limits the scope of *POPD*.

POPD assumes the relationality of value

Value does not reside in the product itself, nor in the meanings attached to it. Value emerges in practice, it is defined by relations between products, and between objects, skills, meanings and temporalities. Design success is situated and situational.

POPD never ends!

POPD is implicated in the long term evolution of practice. *POPD* refutes the temporal linearity of contemporary product design. *POPD* does not end when a product sits on shelf. That moment is but one in the *POPDer's* ongoing relationships with the practices in which they intervene.

Implications:

By seizing hold of the means by which products intervene in practices, POPD shows designers how they shape everyday life and the structures of society. POPD matters for designers who want to change the world and for those who want to sell more stuff.

POPD provides a critical understanding of design in cycles of production, consumption and use. It recognises the flow of meanings, competencies, purposes and products in which designers intervene.

POPD integrates concepts from science and technology studies, consumption and design. POPDers are happy with terms like diffusion, inofusion, domestication and co-evolution.

Methodologically, POPDers study practices now and over time. This requires an eclectic and pragmatic approach: large scale data sets, statistics on the use of time, money and energy, market research, and detailed qualitative exploration of situated practice – all can help in following the traces of practice across time and space.

MANIFESTO OF PRACTICE
ORIENTED PRODUCT DESIGN

POPD

DESIGNERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE
BUT YOUR CLIENTS

Will this manifesto fly?
Find out—fold by numbers.
You'll find the first one (1) overleaf.

3 fold over at this line such that the edge doesn't quite reach centre line

2 fold all along this centre line. Then unfold it again!

4 same as 3

5 now fold down that centre line again

7 fold over so edge matches edge exactly

6 fold over so edge matches edge exactly

8 Last step -tear along these lines and push up through. then make all folds neat.

NO OBJECT IS AN ISLAND
WE ARE ALL PODERS